



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 24 – 30 December 2012



30 Dec 1914 The Army Signal Corps accepted its **first inherently stable aircraft**, the Burgess-Dunne S.C. 36 (at left).

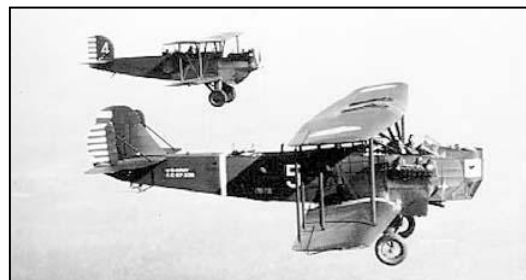


An inherently stable airplane will usually return to the original condition of flight (except when in a bank) if disturbed by a force such as air turbulence. Thus, an inherently stable airplane will require less effort to control than an inherently unstable one.

27 Dec 1935 **Lava flow diversion.** After Mauna Loa volcano on the island of Hawaii erupted, its lava flow threatened the water works for the city of Hilo. Aircraft of the 23rd and 72nd Bombardment Squadrons flew missions to divert the lava flow by dropping twenty 600-pound



bombs in its path. Capt Joe J. Ladd led the flight of five Keystone LB-5s from Luke Field on Ford Island. The 23rd emblem is at left and LB-5 bombers are pictured at right. See a video at this [link](#).



25 December 1941 - The **Hawaiian Air Force Base Command was established at Hickam** with four subordinate echelons—Hickam Field Base Command, Wheeler Field Base Command, Bellows Field Base Command, and the Hawaiian Air Depot (on Hickam). This action separated supply and service functions from tactical functions and operations within the Air Corps.

28 Dec 1941 The **Alaskan Air Force**, (predecessor to the Eleventh Air Force) was established. It was activated at Elmendorf Field, Alaska, on 15 January 1942.



27 Dec 1942 Flying his P-38 Lightning against the Japanese in the Pacific, **2Lt Richard I. Bong scored the first two of his 40 aerial victories.** Bong was later awarded the Medal of Honor, and he remains the top U.S. ace in any war. (Bong's photo is at left). Bong was known for his love of flying and his analytical nature. He got the most from the P-38 aircraft, knew its limitations and never pushed it beyond. He also analyzed the situation before engaging in combat, and did not hesitate to break off an engagement in order to regain the tactical advantage.

28 Dec 1943 **Early Electronic Warfare unit.** VIII Bomber Command formed a "Radio Countermeasure Unit" with 24 specially-equipped heavy bombers. Working with their British counterparts, this unit jammed German radars and radios, dropped chaff and flew "spoofing" missions in support of bombing missions, the D-Day invasion, and other operations.



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24 Dec 1944 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Brig Gen Frederick W. Castle led some 2,000 heavy bombers against German airfields. On the way, an engine on his B-17 failed and he had to drop out of formation. Without fighter escorts, Castle's B-17 became a target for enemy fighters. After sustaining serious battle damage, he ordered the crew to bail out while he remained at the controls. Further attacks brought the bomber down with the General still inside. For his sacrifice, Castle received the Medal of Honor.



26 Dec 1944 **Major Thomas B. McGuire, Jr., reached 38 aerial victories** in the Pacific theater by shooting down four enemy planes, making him the second leading ace in World War II. McGuire died in combat twelve days later. At left, McGuire stands in front of a P-38 Lightning with Richard Bong. At right, McGuire talks with aviation expert Charles Lindbergh.



29 Dec 1988 The U.S. Air Force received its **first operational F-15E Strike Eagle**. The F-15E (left) was a radical departure from earlier, air superiority models of the F-15. The two-seat Strike Eagle is a dual-role fighter capable of engaging enemy aircraft and surface targets simultaneously, without escorting fighters or support jamming.

27 Dec 1992 Two USAF F-16 Fighting Falcons intercepted two MiG-25s in the “no-fly” zone in Southern Iraq. Lt Col Gary North, the 33rd Fighter Squadron Commander, fired an AIM-120A missile to shoot down a MiG-25. This action was the **first F-16 air-to-air victory** and the **first victory using the AIM-120 AMRAAM** (advanced medium-range air-to-air missile). See the video at this [link](#).



F-16 AMRAAM launch

General Gary North was Commander, Pacific Air Forces, from August, 2009 to October, 2012.



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26 Dec 2001 **The Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM)** was approved for low-rate initial production. JASSM is a precision cruise missile designed to be launched at ranges beyond enemy air defenses against both fixed and relocatable targets. After launch, it flies autonomously over a low-level, circuitous route—guided by inertial navigation with updating from a global positioning system. Target recognition and terminal homing is via an imaging infrared seeker. (See photo at left).



26 Dec 2004 **UNIFIED ASSISTANCE TSUNAMI RELIEF.** A 9.0 earthquake in the Indian Ocean triggered an enormous tsunami with 30-foot waves that slammed into the coasts of 13 nations and killed at least 300,000 people. The quake's epicenter was about 65 miles south of the Indonesian island of Sumatra. The death toll was greatest in Indonesia where at least 100,000 people perished. (Photos of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, before and after the tsunami are shown at right.) The tsunami also killed more than 29,000 people in Sri Lanka, 10,000 in India, and 4,600 in Thailand. Another three to five million people in South Asia and Southeast Asia were left without clean water, food, shelter, and sanitation. By the end of Operation Unified Assistance on 23 Feb 2005, AMC aircraft had flown 106 missions to airlift 2,768 passengers and 3,370 short tons of cargo to Bandaranaike IAP in Colombo, Sri Lanka, U-Tapao AB, Thailand, and Banda Aceh and Jakarta IAPs in Indonesia.

